

that of the Fulmar, in order to aid it to rise above the waves.

On 19 November an immature Glaucous Gull was seen off Kinnaird Head. It followed us for a short time, chasing the Kittiwakes occasionally.

24 November. Calm, rather cold. Heligoland Bight.

Birds were almost as conspicuous by their absence in the Bight as the enemy's ships of which we were in search.

An occasional Kittiwake, two Gannets in the distance, and one or two Guillemots and Razorbills were the only birds observed.

III.—*A little-known Bird Colony in the Gulf of Mexico.*

By Lieutenant J. N. KENNEDY, R.G.A., M.B.O.U.

THE Alacran Reefs lie in latitude $22^{\circ} 30'$ N. and longitude $89^{\circ} 30'$ W. in the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, some ninety miles north of the coast of Yucatan. The reefs form a large, roughly elliptical ring, inside which are numerous heads of coral with intermediate veins of deep water. Many parts of the reefs are awash, whilst on others grass and samphire grow luxuriantly.

In May 1912 I paid a short visit to the reefs, in the course of which I had an opportunity of landing on two small islands at the southern extremity, called respectively Pajaros Island and Chica Island, where the bird-colony which forms the subject of the present paper is situated.

On May 19 I had noticed small parties of Sooty Terns returning to the islands from the calm waters inside the reef, where they had been fishing. During the night, which was sultry, there seemed to be little sleep in the colony, for the faint high-pitched murmur of many bird-voices came to us continuously over the water.

On the afternoon of the 20th of May we arranged an expedition to the islands which lay some considerable

distance from us, appearing as a low glittering streak of white sand on the horizon. The coral shelf extended for nearly a mile from the reef at this point, and the shallow waters teemed with gaudily coloured fish, which doubtless formed a plentiful food-supply for the Terns. As we approached Pajaros Island, we perceived it to be a low sand-bank covered to some extent with creeping vegetation. Thousands of Terns arose from it as our keel grated on the beach, and the air was filled with a chorus of defiant screams of alarm. Wading ashore we proceeded to explore the island.

Above the high-water line the ground was literally carpeted with the beautifully marked eggs of the Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuliginosa*). Many of the birds, instead of taking wing at our approach, sat on their eggs in an attitude of defiance, and, with wings outspread and beaks open, screeched angrily at us. So fearless were they that some of them allowed us to take them up in our hands.

Among the hundreds of sitting birds I noticed a small colony of some fifty Terns which I saw to be of another species, their backs being white in contrast to those of the Sooty Terns, which are black. I made my way towards them, hoping to secure a specimen. This, however, was not so easy as I had anticipated, the birds being quite wild. At last I brought one down, which proved to be an example of Cabot's Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis acuflavida*). The Cabot's Terns were all nesting in company, and their eggs were placed close together on a bare patch of sand in the middle of the great Sooty Tern colony.

We made our way to the other end of the island, endeavouring to damage as few eggs as possible as we walked along—it was impossible not to break some, so thickly were they strewn on the ground. Several Blue-faced Boobies (*Sula cyanops*) flew off at our approach, and amongst the herbage we found two great downy youngsters which snapped viciously at the butt of my gun with their heavy beaks.

Near this place we came on four nests of the Laughing

Gull (*Larus atricilla*). The Gulls were the only birds on the island which had made any attempt at the construction of a nest, their eggs being deposited in rough low structures of dried vegetation and seaweed. In three cases the eggs were on the point of hatching, whilst in the fourth they were quite fresh.

The eggs of the Terns were for the most part well incubated, especially those of the Cabot's Terns, but I saw no young birds.

Several Frigate Birds (*Fregata aquila*), which had taken wing some time before, now circled high overhead. I do not think, however, they were nesting on the island.

Before exploring the next island I set out to stalk a flock of some ten small waders which I had noticed on a coral reef near by. They were very shy, but I was lucky enough to secure two which proved to be examples of Baird's Sandpiper (*Tringa fuscicollis*).

Chica Island is slightly smaller than Pajaros Island, near which it lies. On it we found a nesting colony of some fifty pairs of Blue-faced Boobies. The parent birds, particularly those with young, were absolutely fearless, and remained upon their nests snapping at us with their formidable beaks. We drove some of them off their nests, when they rose heavily into the air and circled round our heads. Many of the nests contained young birds a few days old, others two eggs, and several one egg only. We also came on some young birds which appeared to be about a fortnight old.

Specimens of *Sterna fuliginosa*, of *Sterna sandvicensis acuflava*, and of *Tringa fuscicollis* from this locality have been presented to the British Museum by the writer.

IV.—*With the British Association in Australia.*

By A. H. EVANS, M.A., M.B.O.U.

As the Council of the British Association were kind enough to include me in their list of members specially selected to attend the meeting of 1914 in Australia, it is almost a duty